

## **Clinical Trials Network Will Speed Testing and Delivery Of New Drug Abuse Therapies**

By **Patrick Zickler**, NIDA NOTES Staff Writer

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Over the past quarter century, NIDA research programs have produced dramatic advances in understanding drug abuse and addiction and led to the development of an array of new treatments and therapies to help patients with drug abuse problems. But, in order to fulfill their promise, the advances achieved in drug abuse research centers must reach patients in the community-based settings where most treatment is provided. To enhance the delivery of scientifically based treatments to drug abuse patients, NIDA is establishing the National Drug Abuse Treatment Clinical Trials Network.

The Clinical Trials Network (CTN) will provide a structured partnership in which NIDA, treatment researchers, and community-based service providers will cooperatively develop, validate, refine, and deliver new treatment options to patients in community-level clinical practice.

"The Clinical Trials Network is a revolutionary advance in the study and treatment of drug abuse and addiction. It is the most important initiative the Institute has ever undertaken," says NIDA Director Dr. Alan I. Leshner.

The CTN framework will consist of Regional Research and Training Centers (RRTCs) linked in partnership with 5 to 10 or more community-based treatment programs (CTPs). These RRTC/CTP partnerships will constitute CTN Research Nodes. "Each Node will include CTPs that represent a variety of patient populations and will be linked through the Network with other Nodes throughout the country," says Dr. Stephen Zuckin, director of NIDA's Division of Clinical and Services Research. "This means the Clinical Trials Network will provide a broad and powerful infrastructure for rapid multisite testing of promising science-based therapies. Patients in community-based treatment settings across the country will benefit, and benefit sooner, from well-developed science-based care."

The CTN will be national in scope but anchored on community-level programs. The size and diversity of patient populations participating in CTN studies will provide a resource for concurrent testing of promising therapies and will make it possible to conduct comprehensive investigations of factors such as environmental and genetic determinants of vulnerability to drug dependence and abuse. CTN investigators and treatment providers and others in the broader research community will have access to the research database generated by the CTN.

The CTN will help meet one of the principal needs identified in Bridging the Gap Between

Research and Practice, the Institute of Medicine's 1998 report on community-based drug and alcohol treatment. The report recommended the development of an infrastructure to facilitate research within a network of community-based treatment programs. NIDA announced its intention to establish the CTN in December 1998, and has issued a Request for Applications soliciting cooperative agreement applications from established clinical investigators to participate in the Clinical Trials Network.

NIDA has committed first-year funding of \$10 million for the CTN. The Institute plans to make as many as four awards, for project periods up to 5 years, during the first year. When fully developed, the Network will include from 15 to 30 Nodes incorporating well over 100 community treatment facilities.

The CTN partnership is designed to meet a range of objectives that include:

- supporting studies of behavioral, pharmacological, and combined behavioral and pharmacological treatment interventions of proven efficacy in rigorous, multisite clinical trials to determine effectiveness across a broad range of treatment settings and patient populations;
- furthering the development of effective treatments by integrating behavioral, pharmacological, and treatment research;
- investigating the impact of advances in treatment research on community-level treatment practices;
- ensuring that treatment research in drug abuse and addiction meets the needs of the wider community, including minorities, women, children, and underserved populations;
- fostering the collaboration of community treatment practitioners and researchers to provide opportunities for exchange of ideas, information, and values between the treatment and academic communities; and
- determining the impact of the transport of novel, effective treatments in the community on the incidence and prevalence of various other illnesses and conditions, including HIV and hepatitis.

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## For More Information

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Additional information about the Clinical Trials Network is available through NIDA's home page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.nida.nih.gov/> by clicking on the [Clinical Trials Network](#).

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